

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-11 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

SAB-01 ACDA-05 OMB-01 AID-05 /092 W

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R 191410Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9320

INFO DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE/EGJ2

AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 0683

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR EG LE

SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN PRESS ON LEBANESE CRISIS IN WAKE OF KARAMI

1. IN WAKE OF JANUARY 18 RESIGNATION OF LEBANESE PRIMIN KARAMI (WHICH BANNER-HEADLINED IN JANUARY 19 DAILIES), EGYPTIAN PRESS ATTEMPTING TO RECORD IMPRESSION OF FURIOUS DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY IN CAIRO ON LEBANESE QUESTION, ALTHOUGH NOTHING IS REPORTED WHICH WOULD INDICATE ANY DEFINITIVE ACTION IS BEING CONSIDERED BY GOE TO INFLUENCE DETERIORATING LEBANESE SITUATION.

2. ALTHOUGH ALL DAILIES CITE PHALANGIST VIOLATION OF 24TH LEBANESE CEASE-FIRE (BY ASSUALTING MUSLIM QARATINA SECTION) AS CAUSE OF KARAMI'S RESIGNATION, STATEMENT BY EGYPTIAN
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CABINET (WHICH MET JANUARY 18 TO DISCUSS IMPACT OF KARAMI'S

DEPARTURE) APPEARS QUITE BALANCED: GOE DEPLORED IRRESPONSIBLE ACTS OF "SOME " PHALANGIST ELEMENTS;AND REGRETTED "CERTAIN ACTS" WHICH HAD LED TO "UNFORTUNATE INVOLVEMENT OF ARMY" (NO SPECIFIC MENTION MADE OF DAMOUR OR TAL ZAT'AR). PAPERS ALSO REPORT MEETING BETWEEN DEPPRIMIN/FONMIN FAHMY AND LEBANESE AMBASSADOR MUHAMMAD SABRA AND BETWEEN DEPPRIMIN/MINWAR GAMASY AND PLO CAIRO REP RIBHI 'AWAD ON LEBANSEES QUESTION. SABRA, WHO IS INVOLVED IN FRANTIC DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS WITH GOE AND VARIOUS DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN CAIRO IN EFFORT TO ACHIEVE SOME MOVEMENT BY OUTSIDE FORCES TO HALT LEBANESE DRIFT INTO FULL CIVIL WAR, QUOTED BY LOCAL PRESS AS PRAISING CONTINUED EGYPTIAN SUPPORT OF LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY. PLO REP 'AWAD, AFTER GAMASY MEETING, STATED THAT PLO SUPPORTS ANY INITIATIVE WHICH MIGHT CONTRIBUTE TO STABILITY OF CONDITIONS IN LEBANON, AS CONTINUED BATTLES ONLY BENEFIT ENEMIES OF ARAB NATION.

3. PAPERS ALSO REPORT RESOLUTION BY PEOPLES ASSEMBLY, MEETING IN WAKE OF KARAMI'S DEPARTURE, CALLING FOR DURABLE CEASE-FIRE IN LEBANON. ADDRESSING ASSEMBLY AFTER RESOLUTION TAKEN, FAHMY STATED THAT GOE PREPARED FOR EITHER BILATERAL OR ARAB LEAGUE EFFORTS TO AVERT CIVIL WAR IN LEBANON, ALTHOUGH FAHMY MADE TWO PRE-CONDITIONS: DURABLE CEASE-FIRE IN LEBANON MUST BE IMPLEMENTED AND GOL MUST REQUEST EITHER EGYPTIAN OR ARAB LEAGUE INTERVENTION.

4. FAHMY'S CHEF DE CABINET 'USAMA AL-BAZ ALSO QUOTED BY CAIRO DAILIES, COMMENTING THAT EGYPT ONLY ARAB COUNTRY WITH CLEARLY DEFINED STANCE ON LEBANON AND URGING LEBANESE TO COUPLE DURABLE CEASE-FIRE WITH NEGOTIATIONS LEADING TO "RADICAL" SOLUTION OF LEBANESE CRISIS, UNDER WHICH THOSE PARTIES WHO FEEL THAT THEY SUFFER INJUSTICE UNDER PRESENT SYSTEM MIGHT FEEL THAT THEIR DEMANDS COULD BE MET WITOUT FIGHTING.

5. DURING JANUARY 19 CONVERSATION WITH POLCOUNS, SOVIET EMBOFF APPEARED PERPLEXED AS TO PROPER METHOD TO STEM LEBANESE DESCENT INTO CHAOS AND STATED THAT SOVIET EMBASSY CAIRO UNSURE HOW CRISIS WILL END. AT NO TIME DURING CONVERSATION DID SOVIET EMBOFF RAISE POSSIBILITY THAT US
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MIGHT INTERVENE IN LEBANESE CRISIS OR THAT SOVIETS FAVORED ANY JOINT US-USSR INITIATIVE ON SUBJECT.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH LEBANESE EVENTS VIRTUALLY PUSH ALL OTHER NEWS OFF CAIRO FRONT PAGES AND ARTICLES ON CABINET MEETINGS, PEOPLES ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS, AND DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS ABOUND, GOE INABILITY TO GRAPPLE EFFECTIVELY WITH LEBANESE EVENTS PLAINLY SHOWS THROUGH ABUNDANT RHETORIC.

FAHMY STATEMENT THAT GOE PREPARED FOR BILATERAL INITIATIVES
IF ASKED IS MADE DESPITE FACT THAT GOL HAS SHOWN NO INTEREST
IN PAST IN REQUESTING EITHERGOE OR ARAB LEAGUE TO INTERVENE.
EGYPTIAN PRESS REMAINS SILENT ON SYRIAN AND PALESTINIAN REACTIONS
TO KARAMI'S RESIGNATION, BUT OMISSION SCARCELY CONCEALS
FACT THAT EGYPT IS CURRENTLY WITHOUT A ROLE IN LEBANESE
CRISIS.

7. CAIRO RADIO HAS JUST ANNOUNCED (NOON GMT) THAT LEBANESE
STUDENTS HAVE TAKEN OVER LEB EMBASSY IN CAIRO, FORCING EMBASSY
TO CEASE OPERATIONS. STUDENTS HAVE REPORTEDLY ISSUED STATEMENT
CALLING ON EGYPT AND THE ARAB NATION TO INTERVENE QUICKLY TO
SAVE SITUATION IN LEBANON.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, CIVIL DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976CAIRO00683
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760019-1065
From: CAIRO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760145/aaaabnxa.tel
Line Count: 129
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <31 AUG 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EGYPTIAN PRESS ON LEBANESE CRISIS IN WAKE OF KARAMI
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LE, EG, (KARAME, RASHID)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006